



## Coast Guard HR Flag Voice 82

### SERVICE MEDICAL RECORDS AND VA RATING DECISIONS

I have received several questions regarding Flag Voice 74 on CG medical records pertaining to what actions a member can/should take to help expedite any request for a VA disability rating following retirement/separation.

**What are the primary records within the Service Medical Records (SMRs) that are used for rating purposes?**

- Entrance exam
- Discharge exam
- Clinical records
- Physical evaluation board proceedings
- Any record of treatment while in service

**Is there any requirement for the SMRs to be original copies or certified?**

There is no specific citation within the Code of Federal Regulations (38 CFR), M21-1 Parts I-VI, or the Rating Schedule requiring the SMRs to be original or certified. However, the VA will make every effort to obtain the original SMRs from the appropriate source. If the VA is not able to obtain the original, the veteran/claimant is given an opportunity to submit copies of any SMRs they may have in their possession for evidence in support of their claim for VA benefits. However, the process of attempting to obtain original records is protracted. Obtaining a **"certified as original copy" of your medical record**

**prior to separation/retirement** will greatly speed the processing time. CGPC-adm forwards the original SMR to the Veterans Administration Regional Center in St. Louis, MO. for electronic conversion and archiving. When you submit a request for compensation with your local VA regional office, that office requests an electronic copy of your original SMR directly from the VA Archive Center. The compensation review process begins upon receipt of your SMR by the VA. Although the VA will do all it can to assist the claimant in establishing entitlement to benefits and to make a thorough and complete effort to get the veteran's records, the ultimate responsibility for furnishing evidence needed to perfect the claim rests with the claimant. The claimant should obtain a **certified copy of a DD 214** or verification of active duty through other authorized methods.

### **Steps to follow when separating from the service:**

- Obtain a retirement or separation physical examination six months prior to your discharge or separation date. This will provide the opportunity to acknowledge conditions that can be treated or at a minimum, officially documented in your SMR. In addition, the military physical may be sufficient for prospective employers who require a physical exam prior to employment.
- Obtain a complete certified copy of your SMR, to include laboratory tests, mammography and other radiological results. Ensure that either your command or military health care facility certifies the copy of the SMR.
- Send your application for compensation or pension along with a certified copy of the SMR and DD214 to the Veterans Administration Regional office near your home of record or separation destination. Applications for VA compensation and benefits (FORM 10-10EZ) can be obtained from the Internet at <http://www.va.gov>
- Follow-up with the Veterans Administration no later than 90 days after separating from the service to ensure processing of your claim.

Following the above procedure will ensure you've done everything you can to help expedite any claim you submit after leaving the service. It will not always expedite your case since acceptance of the certified copy to commence the process varies by region to region within the VA. We are working to improve the process to ultimately allow the VA to commence the process while an individual is in the process of separating from the service. I will keep you updated as to our progress.

Regards, FL Ames

P.S. New BAH rates will be reflected in the 1 April payday.

Also, please note the following important ALCOAST. For those on SWSIII, I've provided the hyperlinks

to the referenced web sites.

COMDTNOTE 5100

SUBJ: SEAT BELT AND CHILD  
RESTRAINT USE AND THE FEDERAL  
AGENCY SEAT BELT USE SURVEY

A. COMDTINST M5100.47, SAFETY AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH MANUAL

1. THIS ALCOAST RESTATES COAST GUARD POLICY IN REF A ON USE OF SEAT BELTS, EMPHASIZES CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY, HIGHLIGHTS RESOURCES FOR UNIT TRAFFIC SAFETY PROGRAMS AND SOLICITS PARTICIPATION IN THE FEDERAL AGENCY SEAT BELT USE SURVEY.

2. FEDERAL, DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT) AND COAST GUARD  
POLICIES REQUIRE ALL PERSONS OPERATING

OR RIDING IN A MOTOR VEHICLE ON ANY FEDERAL INSTALLATION,  
INCLUDING COAST GUARD FACILITIES, TO

PROPERLY USE SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS AT ALL TIMES WHILE  
THE VEHICLE IS IN MOTION. ALL

COAST GUARD MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL ARE REQUIRED TO  
WEAR SEAT BELTS WHILE ON OFFICIAL

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS AND CONTRACTORS ARE ENCOURAGED TO  
ADOPT OUR SEAT BELT POLICIES. COAST

GUARD PERSONNEL SHOULD ALWAYS USE SEAT BELTS. MANY STATE AND  
LOCAL LAWS REQUIRE THE USE OF

SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS. THE OPERATORS OF MOTOR  
VEHICLES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMING

PASSENGERS OF SEAT BELT REGULATIONS AND ENFORCING THEM AT ALL  
TIMES.

3. THE PRESIDENT AND DOT HAVE ESTABLISHED NATIONAL GOALS FOR IMPROVING

USE OF SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS. THE COAST GUARD GOAL IS SIMPLE: 100 PERCENT USE OF APPROPRIATE RESTRAINTS BY ALL PERSONS, INCLUDING CHILDREN, AT ALL TIMES, IN ANY VEHICLE. ALL LEVELS OF THE CHAIN OF COMMAND SHALL EMPLOY APPROPRIATE MEANS TO REACH THIS GOAL AND LESSEN THE TRAGIC TOLL THAT TRAFFIC MISHAPS TAKE ON UNRESTRAINED OCCUPANTS OF MOTOR VEHICLES. A SURVEY OF COAST GUARD PERSONNEL IN 1999 FOUND THAT ONLY 82 PERCENT OF OUR PEOPLE WERE USING SEAT BELTS ON THEIR DAILY COMMUTES. WHILE ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE, 82 PERCENT IS WELL BELOW OUR GOAL, AND A RECENT SPOT CHECK SUGGESTED THAT OUR USAGE RATE MAY ACTUALLY BE DECLINING. WE CANNOT REST UNTIL WE CONSISTENTLY MEET OUR AMBITIOUS, BUT ATTAINABLE GOAL.

4. IN FEBRUARY, THE BUCKLE UP AMERICA CAMPAIGN EMPHASIZES CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY. NATIONWIDE, AN AVERAGE OF 7 CHILDREN DIE AND 877 ARE INJURED EVERY DAY IN MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES. THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN IS IN THE HANDS OF RESPONSIBLE ADULTS WHO MUST ASSURE THAT CHILD SEATS AND BOOSTER SEATS ARE PROPERLY INSTALLED AND USED, AND WHO MUST SET APPROPRIATE EXAMPLES AND FOSTER HABITS OF SAFE RESTRAINT USE FOR CHILDREN TO FOLLOW THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES.

5. PRESIDENTIAL EXECUTIVE ORDER 13043 REQUIRES FEDERAL AGENCIES TO REPORT PASSENGER RESTRAINT USAGE RATES. TO COMPLY WITH THE EXECUTIVE ORDER, DOT HAS IMPLEMENTED AN ANONYMOUS, ON-LINE SURVEY FORM AT [HTTP://WWW.NHTSA.DOT.GOV/PEOPLE/INJURY/SURVEY/INDEX.CFM](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/survey/index.cfm). COMMANDERS SHALL ENCOURAGE ALL PERSONNEL WITH INTERNET ACCESS, INCLUDING CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES, TO COMPLETE THIS FORM BY 29 FEB 00. THE SURVEY IS SIMPLE AND TAKES ONLY A FEW MINUTES. COMPLETING THE SURVEY WILL ITSELF MAKE PERSONNEL REFLECT ON THEIR OWN USE OF SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINTS. ADDITIONALLY, LOCATIONS MAY WISH TO PERFORM THEIR OWN SURVEYS TO EVALUATE LOCAL PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS.

6. THE NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION (NHTSA) HAS PROVIDED A NUMBER OF USEFUL RESOURCES ON ITS WEB SITE THAT CAN BE USED BY COMMANDING OFFICERS, OINCS, SAFETY OFFICERS AND UNIT SAFETY COORDINATORS TO PROMOTE USE OF PASSENGER RESTRAINTS AND GENERAL TRAFFIC SAFETY. MATERIALS CAN BE PRINTED OR ORDERED ON-LINE FOR LOCAL USE. THESE SITES INCLUDE:

A. MAIN NHTSA LINK: [HTTP://WWW.NHTSA.DOT.GOV](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

B. PRESIDENTIAL PROGRAM INFORMATION: [HTTP://WWW.NHTSA.DOT.GOV/PEOPLE/INJURY/AIRBAGS/PRESBELT](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/presbelt).

C. FEDERAL AGENCY SEAT BELT USE SURVEY FORM:

[C. FEDERAL AGENCY SEAT BELT USE SURVEY FORM:](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/survey/index.cfm)

D. NATIONAL CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY WEEK/BUCKLE-UP AMERICA "BOOST 'EM BEFORE YOU BUCKLE 'EM":

[D. NATIONAL CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY WEEK/BUCKLE-UP AMERICA "BOOST 'EM BEFORE YOU BUCKLE 'EM":](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/boosterseat/index.html)

E. CAMPAIGN SAFE AND SOBER PLANNER 21 FOR FEBRUARY-JUNE 2000

CONTAINING A NATIONAL CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY WEEK GUIDE, MATERIALS ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY, CHILD TRANSPORTATION SAFETY, SAFE WALKING IN WINTER, AND OTHER RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS:

[CONTAINING A NATIONAL CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY WEEK GUIDE, MATERIALS ON SCHOOL BUS SAFETY, CHILD TRANSPORTATION SAFETY, SAFE WALKING IN WINTER, AND OTHER RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS:](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/safesobr/21qp/html)

7. WE HAVE PROGRAMS, GOALS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES, LAWS, POLICIES, AND RESOURCES FOR TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND ENFORCEMENT. THE EQUIPMENT IS AVAILABLE. WE HAVE PROOF THAT THE USE OF SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS PREVENTS INJURIES AND SAVES LIVES. HOWEVER, THE FINAL AND MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IS INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR - THE CHOICE OF ALL PERSONNEL TO USE SEAT BELTS AND CHILD RESTRAINT SYSTEMS WHENEVER IN A MOVING MOTOR VEHICLE. IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OURSELVES, OUR FRIENDS, COWORKERS, OUR LOVED ONES AND ESPECIALLY TO OUR CHILDREN. OUR GOAL IS 100 PERCENT USAGE AND WE MUST WORK HARDER TO ACHIEVE THIS REASONABLE AND VITAL LEVEL OF COMPLIANCE.

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